

Lawler: "The Whole Story Has Not Been Told"

King Going on Trial

Lawler Calls April 5 Date "A Victory"



Steve

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To quantify 1993 or symbolize it in a title could best be labeled, "It Was a Very Weird Year."

Had any of you suggested to me when the year began Jim Ross would be dumped from WCW and emcee *Wrestlemania* and later be joined by Jim Cornette and—for a short term—Boni Blackstone in the World Wrestling Federation, I'd have thought you had sipped on too much Yuletide egg nog.

Had you intimated WCW would end the year by welcoming Gene Okerlund and Bobby Heenan to its on-air stable after reclaiming Ric Flair in the first quarter, I'd have considered you a victim of hallucinations.

Had you predicted two wrestlers would attempt to stab themselves to death in a real-life drama and Jerry Lawler would face the jeopardy of a trial on statutory rape charges, I'd have wondered if you'd watched one too many episodes of *Sally Jessy Raphael*.

Had you told me Vince McMahon would openly do business with two small regional promotions, Hulk Hogan's comeback bid would fail, *Monday Night Raw* would be the success story of a declining era, WCW's TV fortunes would wind up in the hands of Eric Bischoff and Jerry Jarrett would end the year in a major creative capacity with Titan Sports, I'd have surmised you had placed your head on an ice block for a week.

The most immediate story for our first *Matwatch '94* is the latest round in the legal battle facing Lawler (see opposite column). However, inside, we hope you'll have a few reminiscences of the strange year of 1993. Some you'll remember fondly, some with a wisp of sadness, some with anger at how what once was a precious pastime has been cheapened again and again by unnecessary exploits. Happy New Year...and enjoy!

Steve Beverly

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or two months, Jerry Lawler has been predicting each step of his legal fight against charges of statutory rape and sodomy of a 13-year-old girl in Louisville would be the last. Last Friday, after a week of public posturing, Lawler was again proven wrong.

Jefferson County (Ky.) Circuit Court Judge Earl O'Bannon set a trial date of April 5 for Lawler. The decision came inside O'Bannon's chambers after a 25-minute hearing, just one week after Lawler had told *The Commercial Appeal* in Memphis of his certainty the charges would be dropped at the pre-trial session.

Lawler continues under felony indictments of second-degree rape, second-degree sodomy and harassing a grand jury witness in connection with alleged incidents at Louisville motels in May and June. A third alleged sexual encounter in Sellersburg, In., just across the Kentucky border, has led to no charges.

Yet, ironically, Lawler's spin on the story is now one of calling the judge's decision "a victory."

At the Jan. 7 hearing, Mike James, an attorney representing the original accuser (now age 14), confirmed for WLKY-TV reporter John Boel (who broke the story Nov. 12) the girl has signed an affidavit changing the story she gave to the grand jury and Louisville's Crimes against Children police unit. The teenager now insists the encounters with Lawler never happened. However, the prosecutor refused to drop the charges and O'Bannon proceeded with the trial date. A second pre-trial hearing is scheduled March 24, at which time Lawler's attorney Bill Massey says he will file a motion for dismissal.

Outside the Hall of Justice courtroom, Lawler faced reporters, who asked if the case had damaged his career. "I've been around wrestling for 23 years and I think in that length of time, my fans have come to know the kind of person I am," Lawler answered. "They know that I wouldn't do this kind of thing and that I didn't do this. I think that they know I'm innocent, so they know that that's why we want to hurry up and get this thing to a trial and let it be proven." Lawler did not allude to the loss of his lucrative announcing role with the World Wrestling Federation and national exposure.

Lawler, wearing only a grey athletic shirt for the court proceedings, went on to say, "In wrestling, sometimes you have to win two out of three falls. Today is like the first fall went to our side."

Attorney James, who entered the picture after Massey visited the accuser and her mother in mid-November, reportedly at the family's request, to obtain the affidavit, was asked if he was in opposition to the district attorney. "Well, I'm probably in the middle of both of them," said James. "I'm probably gonna be fighting on both sides."

Saturday morning on his *USWA Championship Wrestling* show in Memphis, after three weeks of silence on the matter, Lawler reverted to a high-energy public relations campaign and criticized the Memphis media for its handling of the story, despite the fact only one Memphis television station (WMC-TV, home of the *USWA* show) even

"The prosecutor up there is, I think, trying to make a name for herself off of my name, which I don't really appreciate...I was a little disappointed in the news coverage here in Memphis because everything looked so bleak."

---Jerry Lawler
Jan. 8, 1994

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Jerry Lawler Faces April 5 Trial

(Continued from Page 1)

mentioned the story on its early evening news Jan. 7. WMC allotted 30 seconds to the Lawler trial date 12 minutes into its 5 p.m. *Action News 5*. WREG-TV, the CBS affiliate, ignored the story until its 10 p.m. *News Channel 3*, when it aired WLKY's footage and Lawler soundbite.

Lawler again milked the emotion of his studio and home television audience, saying, "The prosecutor up there is, I think, trying to make a name for herself off of my name, which I don't appreciate. The news stories, I was a little disappointed in the news coverage here in Memphis because the stories made everything look so bleak." Lawler is yet to be asked one challenging question on the case by a Memphis reporter.

Boel Details Lawler Trial Hearing

LOUISVILLE—The following is a transcript of WLKY-TV reporter John Boel's Jan. 7 story on Jerry Lawler's pre-trial hearing on illegal sex charges:

Jerry Lawler appears to have the upper hand now. The King comes to court with a smile, because the 13-year-old girl he's accused of having sex with has changed her story.

Attorneys for the girl and for Lawler say the teen has filed a five-page affidavit changing her story, denying sex ever occurred between the two:

BOEL (to girl's attorney Mike James): This seems to put you right now in the position of being opposed to the prosecutor...if the girl is saying it didn't happen.

JAMES: Well, I'm probably in the middle of both of 'em. I'm probably gonna be fighting on both sides.

Two teens originally said Lawler picked them up from Louisville Gardens last summer and they had sex with Lawler in hotels in southern Indiana and Louisville. Lawler's attorney says the absence of any charges in Indiana yet shows the weak case they had here in Louisville.

BOEL (to Lawler): What type of effect has this had on your career?

LAWLER: Fortunately everybody that knows me and knows my reputation over the years knows there's no basis to these lies.

Prosecutors promise to push on with the case even though the girl's attorney calls their case worthless without any physical evidence. Lawler's fans also promise to push on.

LETTIE DARGEL (Lawler fan): I've always thought he's innocent. He's always around young kids.

DONNA PAYTON: 'Cause he's always been so nice. He comes out. He takes pictures with kids. I just really don't think he did it.

BOEL (Standup): Jerry (The King) Lawler will stand trial here on April 5th. Until then, he will continue to wrestle in Louisville and anyplace else that will put him on the schedule. John Boel...Channel 32 News.

Lawler then detailed his side of the story, recapping most of the account he offered to WMC-TV News in mid-November. However, this was the first time he had detailed the precise charges to the wrestling TV audience. As a long-time Memphis observer told *Matwatch '94*, "You've got to remember that, even in 1994, and even with a real-life story like this, as far as his wrestling audience is concerned—to Lawler, if it hasn't happened on the Saturday morning TV show, it hasn't happened yet."

The 13-time "unified world" champion proceeded to show a VHS copy of Boel's story, which—at deadline—questions remain if Lawler had gained permission of WLKY to air on the wrestling broadcast (*Ed. Note: most television news departments have a specific policy against releasing footage for airing on any program other than another station's news broadcast out of concern of perceptions of becoming a party's advocate. In the three TV stations where I was news director, we had a policy prohibiting release of such video.*)

Reporter Boel told *Matwatch '94* the district attorney appears, on the surface, to have virtually no case remaining and said a puzzle remains why the case would continue unless evidence exists not being detailed.

Matwatch '94, however, has learned a second teenage girl, who testified before the grand jury and Louisville investigators and was alleged to be along on the three dates in question, has apparently not changed her story. Speculation is the prosecutor may be continuing to hinge the case, termed two months ago by one Louisville police investigator to be "open and shut," on the second 14-year-old's testimony holding firm.

As late as New Year's week, Lawler had predicted to some of his USWA performers the case would be over last weekend and he fully expected to return to the World Wrestling Federation by February. He remains officially in an "on hiatus" status with the WWF.

Transcript of Lawler's Jan. 8 TV Interview

"You know, 1993, for me started off good but as, it's no secret to anybody, didn't wind up too well. There were a lot of allegations made...a lot of stories going around. Hopefully, these things are gonna get cleared up soon. I know I've been saying that for a while. But every now and then, you keep hearing something else.

Yesterday, my attorney William Massey and I went back up to Louisville, Kentucky. Let me just briefly put this thing in a nutshell because the whole story to this has never been told. I think everybody realizes there are a lot of wrestling fans that are around wrestling. A few months ago, a couple of young girls in Louisville, Kentucky, told a story to a boyfriend, a jealous boyfriend of theirs, that they had been with some wrestlers. And my name was mentioned. This boyfriend went to some authorities up there, claimed that these girls told this story to him and then, they came after me and all of this thing mushroomed.

After the publicity came out, the girls went back and said, 'Look, this didn't really happen. We just made this story up.' Now, we have a situation where the prosecutor up there is, I think, trying to make a name for herself off of my name, which I don't really appreciate. But what we're gonna do now is, hopefully, April the 5th is a trial date and we'll get this things settled, once and for all.

The news stories—I was a little disappointed in the news coverage here in Memphis because everything looked so bleak. But I just wanted to show you the news that was on in Louisville yesterday after we came out of the courtroom. Yesterday, really was a good day. There was an attorney there representing the young girls and he even called the case worthless. (*After news story*) April 5th now is the soonest court date and that is what my attorney William Massey and I want. The prosecutor, as you saw, is just trying to get her face on TV and her name in the newspaper. Now...let's talk about wrestling.

Man Of The Year



Vince Mc Mahon

He did what most analysts believed he would never do. He faced a year of perpetual adversity. His megameal ticket failed to recapture the masses. He embraced two much smaller regional promotions, regardless of speculated motivation. He spirited away the acknowledged leader of wrestling announcers. He dumped a celebrated heel commentator for encountering controversial felony charges while keeping himself in front of the public eye after his own indictments.

While in any year, he is a candidate for the role, Vince McMahon is the choice for the 1993 *Matwatch* Man of the Year. McMahon earned the title by demonstrating the scrambling necessary for an executive to keep a troubled company afloat; the surprise performance level which lifted him to the top of his game as host of the new *Monday Night Raw* (which became the unqualified leader among cable wrestling shows) and in a series of the best interviews in wrestling during 1993; and for his controversial decision to maintain a high television profile despite being the focus of what may be the most pivotal (or overblown) story of the modern wrestling era.

McMahon began the year on the verge of losing his prized steal of 1991, Ric Flair, back to his old camp of World Championship Wrestling. His *Prime Time Wrestling* was exposing tired ratings legs after three format changes in 18 months. The veteran Hulk Hogan's status with the WWF was tenuous, at best. Despite public posturing to the contrary, McMahon was under tighter budget constraints amidst huge legal expenses in defending against a variety of accusations in a federal investigation which would end in celebrated indictments at year's end.

Turning a page back to wrestling's roots, McMahon dumped the *Prime Time* label and reformatted his flagship Monday night cable show into a live, one-hour extravaganza similar to *Live from Sunnyside Garden* and the myriad of small New York-area arena shows which dotted TV's landscape of the 1950s.

Raw restored a sense of spontaneity to national TV wrestling with frequent ringside angles and direct face-to-face confrontations between a re-energized McMahon and heel performers. The show would become the industry's top cable ratings performer and three times reached a 3.4 rating, once against the tough competition of *Monday Night Football*.

While losing Flair, McMahon still won a sense of the day. To gain his release, Flair was required to drop a loser-leave-the-WWF bout to Curt Hennig in a clean pinfall on *Raw*.

However, with arena business—except on the international front—languishing and merchandise sales down, McMahon turned back to the pivotal star of the 1980s to rebuild fortunes. Stunningly, Hulk Hogan failed to generate a mass return to the turnstiles and within a month after a *Wrestlemania* appearance, Hogan was again out of the picture.

As summer approached, speculation—some irresponsible—in wrestling journals and on telephone hotlines mounted as to an imminent indictment against McMahon for charges surrounding a two-year Justice Department investigation into his conduct and that of the World Wrestling Federation.

Publicly, McMahon would maintain a "business as usual" posture. In April, after WCW experienced a contractual lapse of not paying its recently-deposed flagship announcer Jim Ross on time, McMahon spirited Ross (and his popular Atlanta radio show) away, announcing on WSB-AM, "WCW's loss is our gain. This is like another network getting John Madden away from CBS." Ross would quickly be installed as the host of *Wrestlemania* and syndication's *Wrestling Challenge*.

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Other Top Candidates

Among the leading considerations for the *Matwatch* '93 Man of the Year designation:

—ERIC BISCHOFF, WCW: The young hot-shot who captured the attention of WCW president Bill Shaw to become the unit's executive producer for television (and later a senior vice president) changed the philosophy of syndicated television tapings. While cable ratings have improved, syndie numbers are still at a crossroads.

—JERRY JARRETT, USWA/WWF: For Jarrett to continue as the only survivor of wrestling's traditional territory system and become embraced as a feeder promoter for McMahon was no small accomplishment.

—BIG VAN VADER, WCW: Without question, the top overall in-ring performer in 1993, particularly on big shows.

Man of the Year: McMahon

(Continued from Page 3)

After less-than-spectacular success with The Undertaker, Flair, Randy Savage and Bret Hart as world champion throughout late 1992 and early '93, McMahon reverted to the franchise, Hogan. Settling into a routine which made former heel manager Jimmy Hart as Hogan's mentor and Brutus Beefcake (Ed Leslie) joining the Hogan camp for a return from his critical injuries of 1990, Hogan failed to bring fans out in large numbers. Averaging only 3,000 per show with Hogan on top, the one-time WWF megastar stared the situation in the face and removed himself from the spring tour amid reports of major differences with McMahon, reports disputed by some WWF insiders.

McMahon had already embraced a rival promotion in an attempt to prop up sagging fortunes and test new talent. Jerry Jarrett's USWA, first through an unsuccessful Jeff Jarrett challenge of Hart, and later through the incorporation of Jerry Lawler in a heel "king" role, became the training ground for new WWF characters, including performers who eventually became Men on a Mission and Well Dunn. McMahon would move Lawler into the announce booth on *Superstars of Wrestling*, a show he would drop in Memphis in a feeble attempt to preserve Lawler's babyface role in his hometown (negating Memphis viewers who would see Lawler portray a heel on the USA Network cable shows). Before the summer was out, McMahon would bring in Jim Cornette from Smoky Mountain Wrestling, which stunned hardcore fans knowledgeable of Cornette's past insistence he would never work for Titan. McMahon would openly discuss SMW on his national shows and scheduled a Smoky Mountain tag title bout on his *Survivor Series* show.

With the heat of the federal investigation intensifying, McMahon loosened up for a summer role which arguably locked the honors as the best series of interviews of 1993. Reversing his national TV role, McMahon played a heel in interviews sent to the Memphis USWA show. McMahon insulted Memphis fans as "ignorant, depraved, sick people" for their allegiance to Lawler. Yet, he never raised his voice. He maintained a cool, collected, arrogance which helped raise attendance for several summer shows. McMahon capped the TV slots with an in-person appearance at the Mid-South Coliseum, where he and long-time WWF aide Pat Patterson interfered in a Lawler bout.

Was McMahon's olive branch to competitors, albeit smaller, weaker ones, a new, was it a disguise to gain control of the long-coveted WMC-TV Saturday time period in Memphis, or was it an attempt to swerve federal investigators? Published reports indicate at least two of the three had merit. McMahon's ability to rob top-level talent from WCW had slowed considerably in the face of Turner's guaranteed salaries and long-term contract deals. So, he needed an alternative to test new talent and angles under game conditions. However, insider newsletters and a December roundtable discussion on *The Real Wrestling Hotline* centered on the cross-promotional arrangement as a possible desire to diffuse federal probes into alleged monopolistic practices of the World Wrestling Federation.

However, on the inside of the Stamford, Ct., company, McMahon was preparing for change. The public relations line had McMahon turning over the presidency of Titan Sports to wife Linda because of 1993's mythical designation by politicians as the "Year of the Woman." However, insider reports in the *New York Post* and several other wrestling publications speculated on McMahon's motives as an effort to save the company from potential federal attempts to break up Titan Sports, should indictments and a future trial ensue. McMahon retained his executive capacity within the company.

While internal jockeying continued, McMahon was delivering sterling performances as the host of *Raw*, far more energized than in the many years of post-edited syndicated television. However, the bottom was dropping out of the overall advertising market for syndicated wrestling television. Some national trade magazines estimated the upfront market for commercials was down \$4 million over the previous year, which would hit hard into the Titan coffers. During the year, as budget-tightening measures, McMahon began insisting (except for Lawler) on his commentators moving to Connecticut to save on extensive travel costs. Randy Savage and Jim Ross did. However, Gene Okerlund and Bobby Heenan were both balking at the arrangement. McMahon also eased away from major arenas for television tapings and into 3,000-5,000-seat buildings. Gone were most references to taping locations. Virtually the last eight months of television was taped in the Northeast, similar to WCW's taping rotation in Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. Cost-consciousness was the motto in Titan Sports, though no corners were being cut on new TV technology, including an electronic video wall.

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McMahon's '94 Moments

JANUARY

Premiere of *Monday Night Raw*, which becomes cable's highest-rated wrestling show and revives the declining prime time slot on USA Cable.

FEBRUARY

Ric Flair departs back to WCW in loser-leave WWF defeat against Curt Hennig on *Raw*.

MARCH

McMahon signs Jim Ross to host *Wrestlemania* and *Wrestling Challenge*.

APRIL

Jerry Lawler begins stint as co-host of *Superstars of Wrestling*. Hulk Hogan comeback after *Wrestlemania* dies after four weeks of weak arena crowds.

SUMMER

McMahon turns over presidency of Titan Sports to his wife Linda amid speculation federal indictments on illegal steroid charges are imminent. King-of-the-Ring pay-per-view spotlights Bret Hart-Lawler feud and becomes the most critically acclaimed show of the year. McMahon creates the "Lex Express," a nationwide bus tour designed to elevate Lex Luger to the old Hogan star level. McMahon begins sending taped appearances—as a heel—to the Memphis USWA show. McMahon appears live at the Mid-South Coliseum in August to insult the Memphis fans and interferes in a Lawler bout. However, rumors of a McMahon in-ring appearance fizzle.

FALL

McMahon's *Summer Slam* underperforms expectations in pay subscriptions. Jim Cornette makes his first live appearance on *Monday Night Raw*. *Radio WWF* syndicated Saturday night broadcast begins. The upfront market for national advertising drops approximately \$4 million, forcing McMahon to consider belt-tightening. Gene Okerlund leaves for a major on-air and front office role with WCW.

NOVEMBER

Jerry Lawler is indicted Nov. 12 on statutory rape charges in Louisville. McMahon immediately removes Lawler from television and arenas.

In the following two weeks, McMahon and Titan Sports are indicted and arraigned on charges of illegal steroid distribution and conspiracy. The Justice Department seeks to strip McMahon from the company in the indictment. Trial date is set for May 2. McMahon refuses to step aside as WWF announcer.

DECEMBER

After failure to reach agreement on new contract terms, Bobby Heenan leaves for WCW.

TOP 10 TV NEWS STORIES OF 1993

1 McMAHON, TITAN WOES

As detailed in the Man of the Year story, the long-anticipated federal charges against Vince McMahon and Titan Sports on alleged illegal steroid distribution and related accusations became the fodder for all three network newscasts and at least three syndicated tabloid newsmagazines. The even larger story looms if the case does go to trial in May as currently scheduled.

of 1994, Boni Blackstone would join him as an interviewer, Joe Farmer (late of *Knights and Warriors*) would take over *All-American Wrestling* and Jerry Lawler would join Vince McMahon as sidekick on *Superstars of Wrestling*. By year's end, Blackstone and Farmer would be gone in budget-cutting moves and Lawler would be dumped because of illegal sex charges.

In the fall, the veteran Gene Okerlund, one of McMahon's first hires in his late 1983 national expansion, defected to WCW and became host of *WCW Worldwide* and *Saturday Night*. At year's end, the venerable Bobby Heenan would join Okerlund on the wagon train to Atlanta.

8 DECLINE, REBOUND IN TV RATINGS

The success story of *Monday Night Raw* in 1993 is detailed on this month's Ratings Page (see page 7). Averaging a solid 2.9 for its first year, *Raw* provided evidence of a turnaround for flagship shows. However, the first 21 weeks of the Eric Bischoff regime in WCW resulted in a 2.1 average for *WCW Saturday Night*, its lowest-ever five-month total.

A summer Ric Flair-Sting TV match began to turn the WCW fortunes around with a 3.4 rating and an 8.7 per cent share, highest share for a weekly wrestling show in eleven years. The Flair-Sting bout scored a 9.8 per cent share of audience.

However, *Clash of the Champions* dropped to an all-time low 2.6 in June and *WCW Main Event* and *WWF All-American* languished at the 2 level or below most of the year.

2 JIM ROSS DUMPED AS WCW ANCHOR

After five years at the helm of World Championship Wrestling broadcasts, including every pay-per-view since Ted Turner's ownership of the company, Jim Ross was unceremoniously canned as a WCW on-air host in a house-cleaning by WCW President Bill Shaw and a power play by Ross' WCW colleagues. Ross would be consigned to a role in syndication sales but would quickly rebound to emcee the *WWF's Wrestlemania* and *Wrestling Challenge*.

5 JIM CORNETTE JOINS WWF

While not renouncing the vows to his Smoky Mountain Wrestling, Jim Cornette shocked the insider world with his jump to the WWF for TV appearances in early fall. Cornette, brought in to save the flagging angles involving Yokozuna as WWF champion, had vowed for years never to go to Titan Sports.

"They just don't represent what I feel is professional wrestling," Cornette said in a 1991 interview with *Matwatch*. But Cornette's SMW group would be the first outside promotion ever to be acknowledged on-air by McMahon in more than ten years.

3 DRAMATIZED WCW MURDER ATTEMPTS

In what touched off a furor of summer controversy, WCW marketing director Sharon Sidello produced a "minimovie" for the company's *Beach Blast* pay show which depicted Vader and Sid Vicious as accomplices to an attempted murder of Sting and Davey Boy Smith.

The \$80,000 sequence showed a midjet attempting to plant a bomb on the boat of Sting and Smith. TBS refused a second airing of the filmed skit and the scene was excoriated in *Broadcasting and Cable* magazine, as it aired shortly after Ted Turner's address to Congress decrying excessive TV violence.

6 BISCHOFF BECOMES TOP PRODUCER

Stunning the core of inside followers, Eric Bischoff was tapped by WCW President Bill Shaw to direct the creative fortunes of the company in March. Bischoff's appointment is still a source of intense debate. While Saturday night ratings have shown a slow, modest increase under Bischoff, his decision to tape 12 weeks ahead for syndication while giving away pay-per-view title changes has created a firestorm.

9 JERRY LAWLER RAPE, SODOMY CHARGES

While not gaining national attention, television broke this story of alleged sex-with-teenagers on the CBS affiliate, WLKY-TV, in Louisville, Ky.

Reporters John Boel and Mark Grimm developed inside sources with the accusing family and Louisville's Crime Against Children unit in breaking the story Nov. 12.

Equally significant was the comparative inattention given the story by Memphis television news, which Lawler has criticized. No Memphis reporter is yet to ask Lawler a challenging question about the case.

4 TALENT BOUNCES BETWEEN BIG 2

The year was not characterized by major in-ring talent defections but by massive switches and hires of announce talent between the big two.

Jim Ross' move to the WWF in the spring was the first salvo. Before the end

7 McMAHON APPEARS IN MEMPHIS

In a series of surprise appearances on the Memphis USWA show in mid-summer, Vince McMahon turned himself into a cool, collected, calculating heel in what arguably were the top interviews of 1993. For seven weeks, McMahon insulted Memphis viewers as ignorant rubes and built intensity for his conflict with Jerry Lawler in the WWF.

10 UWFI JOINS PAY-PER-VIEW CONTENDERS

Occasional attempts to join wrestling's big two in the pay-per-view competition have failed. A consortium of promoters, led by Verne Gagne, bombed with the 1988 *SuperClash*. Tor Berg managed only one show with his LPWA in 1991.

However, the Japanese-based UWFI entered the race with a show in October built as "shootwrestling" to at least modest success. While the buy-rate is still being disputed, industry sources estimate an 0.4 per cent buy-in, which would place the event on par with many of the year's WCW pay-per-views. However, WCW champion Vader's match was barred from airing.

Plans are in development for two more UWFI American pay shows during 1994.

THE RATINGS PAGE

CABLE WRESTLING RATINGS

Dec. Averages	Rating/Share	Total Homes	Nov. Avg.
Monday Night Raw	3.0/4.5	1.86 million	2.9/4.2
WCW Sat. Night	2.2/4.3	1.36 million	2.7/5.3
WWF All-American	2.1/5.4	1.364 million	1.9/5.1
WCW Main Event	1.8/3.3	1.107 million	2.1/3.4
WWF Mania	1.4/4.6	870,000	1.4/4.3
WCW Power Hour	1.4/5.4	861,000	1.6/6.4

Week Ending Dec. 6	Rating/Share	Total Homes	N. Rank
Monday Night Raw	2.9/4.1	1.802 million	12
WCW Sat. Night	2.6/5.0	1.601 million	23
WWF All-American	2.5/6.3	1.553 million	25
WWF Mania	1.3/4.0	811,000	
WCW Power Hour	1.3/5.0	800,000	

Week Ending Dec. 13

Monday Night Raw	3.3/5.0	2.051 million	9
WCW Saturday Night	2.5/5.0	1.539 million	28
WWF All-American	1.9/4.9	1.182 million	
WCW Main Event	1.7/3.0	1.046 million	
WWF Mania	1.4/4.3	875,000	
WCW Power Hour	1.3/4.8	802,000	

Week Ending Dec. 20

Monday Night Raw	3.0/4.5	1.869 million	10
WCW Saturday Night	2.5/4.8	1.545 million	27
WCW Main Event	2.0/3.8	1.266 million	
WWF All-American	2.0/5.3	1.264 million	
WWF Mania	1.6/5.5	994,000	
WCW Power Hour	1.4/5.7	861,000	

Week Ending Dec. 27

Monday Night Raw	2.9/4.5	1.805 million	18
WWF All-American	1.9/5.1	1.186 million	
WCW Main Event	1.6/3.0	985,000	
WCW Power Hour	1.5/6.3	923,000	
WCW Saturday Night	1.0/2.4	619,000	

THE FOURTH QUARTER

	Rating/Share	Total Homes	3Q Rat/Sh
Monday Night Raw	2.9/4.3	1.805 million	2.8/4.4
WCW Saturday Night	2.4/4.8	1.478 million	2.4/5.9
WWF All-American	2.0/5.0	1.245 million	2.2/6.4
WCW Main Event	1.8/3.3	1.111 million	1.9/4.5
WCW Power Hour	1.4/5.9	871,000	1.4/6.4
WWF Mania	1.3/4.3	811,000	1.2/4.5

Without question, the fourth quarter cemented *Monday Night Raw* as the TV success story of pro wrestling in the entire '90s. After one year ago, a decline for the old *Prime Time Wrestling* to a 2.2 average rating and predictions of the ultimate demise of the Monday night mat on USA, *Raw* not only maintained but bettered its third quarter average against one of the toughest schedules of ABC *Monday Night Football* in history. *Raw* was up 32% in rating over the 1992 PTW fourth quarter and gained 4% from the previous three months. *Raw* would have averaged a 3, subtracting the weak replay of the *Survivor Series Showdown* in late November.

WCW Saturday Night improved from its 2.2 of the year before fourth quarter but could only maintain the 1993 third quarter 2.4 average after a weak showing in early October and the predictably disastrous 1.0 Christmas night, lowest rating in TBS Saturday evening mat history. However, none of the ratings for the week of Dec. 20-26 count for either USA or TBS in advertising averages because of the low number of sets in use. *Saturday Night* would have scored a 2.5 without the holiday night bomb.

Among the also-rans, *All-American* suffered slippage to a 2.0, down 4% from the previous year and 9% from the 2.2 in the summer quarter. The strong NFL pre-game show competition (and games opposite on the West Coast) destroyed the chances for the Sunday WWF offering, which has also encountered fluctuations in talent and format.

WCW Main Event did manage to climb above the 1.7 in last year's fall quarter but still fell from the 1.9 in the previous three months. *Main Event* has been for the last two years arguably the most tired show on the air and needs extensive reformatting or cancellation. Not even the loss of NFL competition this quarter will likely help its average.

The morning race went to the *Power Hour*, which dropped in share. *WWF Mania* did gain a tenth of a point from the third quarter but also fell in share, in part because of strong college football competition in the western feed.

FINAL NOTES

Early January saw *Raw* tie its all-time high Jan. 10 with a 3.4 for the first anniversary show after a slip to 2.5 Jan. 3. *Saturday Night* opened the year with a 1.9 and 2.3, off from its early '93 marks. *All-American* launched with a strong 2.4 Jan. 9 and *WCW Main Event* posted a 2.1 the same day....TBS will likely be pleased if the Jan. 27 *Clash of the Champions* scores a 3.3-3.5....FoxNet is giving *Main Event* and *WCW Pro* encore airings Sunday nights late from 11:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m....*Smoky Mountain Wrestling* is also now airing Saturdays at 8 a.m. (ET) on Channel America....ESPN2 has moved reruns of *Global Supercard* to 4 p.m. (ET) weekdays after the overnight airings were the lowest-rated of all ESPN2 shows.

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HEADLINES

Lawler Takes On Callers

MEMPHIS---Reaching predominantly sympathetic callers, Jerry Lawler again predicted victory in his pending legal battle on WMC-AM's *Sportstalk* Jan. 13.

However, one caller challenged whether Lawler has come clean in the case, suggesting grand jury investigations rarely explode from what Lawler has called "exaggerated girl talk."

Lawler became a bit testy and responded the only people "not in my corner in this thing are the news media and the newsletters." Lawler suggested wrestling newsletters get their information "from rumor and innuendo."

Ventura Again Attacks Ross

ATLANTA---Continuing what many analysts have termed childish professional behavior, Jesse Ventura continued his attacks on *Wrestling Challenge* host Jim Ross on Ventura's WCW Hotline segment Jan. 12.

Ventura, who has re-signed with WCW for a reported \$400,000, lampooned Ross's weight, his family and his past awards.

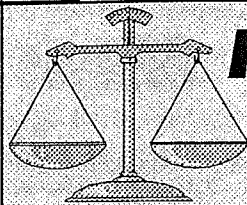
The WCW co-host said Ross has won six consecutive *Wrestling Observer* Announcer of the Year awards "because he was an inside source for Dave Meltzer when Ross was at WCW." Meltzer said he laughed at Ventura's charge. At deadline, Ross had not responded.

Ellis Meets On USWA Future

MEMPHIS---New WMC-TV owner Bert Ellis met in closed session with USWA co-owner Jerry Lawler Jan. 13 to discuss the future of wrestling on the NBC affiliate.

Ellis reportedly is offering to retain the veteran series but is still refusing to pay production costs for the show.

Insiders say majority USWA owner Jerry Jarrett did not attend. At deadline, unconfirmed reports had long-time WWF creative staff member J.J. Dillon headed in as USWA general manager.



MATWATCH '93 EDITORIALS

CUT THE CRAP, GUYS

Insider wrestling fans have perpetually demonstrated an affinity for controversy. However, disciplined readers have in the last two years shown a stronger interest in straight news coverage and analysis and fewer personal attacks. That word obviously has not reached the hotlines of the two major American wrestling organizations.

While baseball is referred to as adults playing a kid's game, segments of the WCW Hotline and an episode of *Radio WWF* recently demonstrated behavior on the part of three respected personalities which was reduced to juvenile levels.

Since the departure of Jim Ross from WCW early last year, Jesse Ventura has been on a virtual one-man campaign to discredit Ross. Beginning with Ross's appearance in a toga as part of the Greek theme for *Wrestlemania* at Caesar's Palace, virtually no element of Ross's personal or professional life has escaped the sarcastic mouth of Ventura.

Ross has ignored most of it—until the arrival in WCW of Gene Okerlund. In his premiere WCW Hotline edition in October, Okerlund began by saying, "When they began hiring all of those Southerners—people like Jim Ross and Boni Blackstone, particularly Ross, I knew it was time to get out (of the WWF). Ross hardly has the image for a big-time national promotion."

Ventura has lately chimed in with lampoons of Ross's professionalism, his family and references to Ross as "that fat Okie" and unflatteringly linking Ross to the WWF's Doink the Clown storyline. His latest charge is Ross has won six straight *Wrestling Observer* Announcer of the Year awards because "he's Dave Meltzer's friend" and because of Ross being "an inside source for Meltzer when he was at WCW."

Yet, Ross has only compounded the felony by responding on his Saturday night radio show by suggesting Ventura is "overrated" (based on Jesse's 1993 work, Ross is correct but the reference was unnecessary) and making cracks about Dusty Rhodes' weight.

Ventura and Okerlund have clearly crossed the line of humor to engage in a series of mean-spirited, vicious attacks. If Ross were of ethnic origin, some writers would scream of slurs. One wonders why? A sense of desperation?

We suppose Ventura has been a shining example with his on-air slurs against Hispanics, his disrespect of women and open sexual innuendo on pay-per-view broadcasts. As for Okerlund, this is the man who outright lied on at least two occasions on *WCW Saturday Night* about the content of his hotline program, the most blatant of which was a claim he had comments from at least eight former world champions on the Ric Flair-Vader *Starrcade* bout when Okerlund, in fact, never spoke to Terry Funk or Jack Brisco and likely most of the men he named.

Jim Ross has made his friends and enemies in wrestling. However, this is the same man who often worked 80-hour weeks at WCW for a third of the pay Ventura receives. Ross has announced the highest-rated broadcasts in the history of cable television. When WCW made what *Matwatch '94* still considers an ill-advised move to oust Ross in early 1993, his talents were valued enough that he became the host of the flagship show in pay-per-view wrestling. As for his six awards, Ross didn't need Meltzer's friendship for them. He earned them by his work. Yes, he had internal critics at WCW who scathed him for being an office politician and, at times, too blunt. He also locked horns on occasion with the revered Ric Flair which is always a risky move (and yet, Ross was predominantly right in those disputes). But no one can argue Ross is the best-prepared announcer in wrestling before any broadcast he anchors.

What is sad and disgusting about this entire exchange is none of it is necessary. Ventura and Okerlund are part of the first million-dollar announce trio in mat history. They have both been regarded as top-flight professionals in their fields. To engage in this kind of verbal spitball-shooting cheapens them to the level of high school food fights.

For Ross to bark back on his radio show is also beneath the class Ross typically shows in his work. We call on Jim to do the respectable and professional thing: ignore Gene and Jesse and forget about them. Neither of them are worth the responses and your responses only calls attention to their childish cracks and lowers you to their level.

As for Ventura and Okerlund, *Matwatch '94* will not resort to the contemporary cliché "get a life." However, we do call on both men to start behaving as adults and cut the on-air crap. At last glance, your organization was still a distant second in ratings and revenue. You would best be served by concentrating on improving your own work. Ross can take care of himself.

"Matty" Awards For 1993

Top play-by-play: 1. Vince McMahon, WWF. Primarily for strong performances on *Monday Night Raw*, though preoccupied at year's end. 2. Jim Ross, WCW/WWF. Actually #1A, only because of gap period where Jim was off the air. 3. Bob Caudle, SMW. 4. Chris Cruise, WCW. 5. Tony Schiavone, WCW. 6. Dave Brown, USWA.

Top analysts: 1. Bobby Heenan, WWF. Consistently the most entertaining of all. WCW's gain in '94. 2. Jerry Lawler, WWF. 3. Larry Zbyszko, WCW. Perhaps the most underrated. 4. Jesse Ventura, WCW. Sorry, gang. Jesse just coasted in '93. 5. Dutch Mantel, SMW. 6. Jim Cornette, WWF. Would be higher but only had one shot. 7. Johnny Polo, WWF. 8. Terry Taylor, WCW. 9. Rod Price, GWF. Worst: Corey Macklin, USWA.

Studio hosts: 1. Gene Okerlund, WWF/WCW. 2. Cruise, WCW. 3. Todd Pettengill, WWF.

Top moves: 1. WCW, signing Okerlund and Heenan. 2. WWF, signing Ross. 3. WWF, adding radio coverage of pay-per-views. 4. WWF, adding Lawler. 5. WWF, dumping Lawler after sex charges. 6. WWF, signing Cornette. Worst: 1. McMahon staying on air after indictments. 2. Dave Brown lending support to Lawler on USWA. 3. WCW giving away pay-per-view finishes at Disney-MGM.

Dreaded glitches: 1. WCW, Nasty Boys holding belts on *WCW Main Event*, saying they were coming after Scorpio and Bagwell "to get the belts back." 2. WCW, *Multichannel News* ad giving away finish of Flair-Vader *Starrcade* bout before airing of show.

Top moments: 1. Ric Flair's emotional reactions at *Starrcade*. 2. McMahon heel interviews on USWA. 3. Vader powerbomb on Cactus Jack and silence on air while ambulance carries off Cactus. 4. Bret Hart accusations of Ric Flair as "overrated" on *Radio WWF*. 5. Terry Funk exhorting the wrestling industry to clean itself up on *The Real Wrestling Hotline*. 6. Hart/Lawler closing angle on *King-of-the-Ring*. 7. Jim Cornette's appearance on *Monday Night Raw*. Worst: 1. WCW attempted murder minmovie. 2. WCW sequences depicting Cactus Jack amnesia. 3. "Flair for the Gold" on WCW. 4. Gene Okerlund lying about content of his Saturday night WCW Hotline sequences. 5. Use of stungun on Vader-Cactus *Halloween Havoc* bout. 6. WWF soliciting western viewer votes in 900 poll after results already announced on east coast edition of *Monday Night Raw*.

Best executives: 1. Jerry Jarrett, USWA. The guy has survived and maneuvered himself into a creative capacity with the WWF. 2. Jim Cornette, SMW. To become the first acknowledged competition of the WWF on-air in more than ten years is a coup. Worst: Bill Shaw, WCW, for hiring of Eric Bischoff and handling of Sid Vicious-Arn Anderson situation.

Best interviews: 1. McMahon, USWA heel interviews. Without question, the best of the year. 2. Flair, *Starrcade* build-up. This is the genuine Flair babyface long overdue. 3. Steve Austin, WCW. Clearly the most improved in the entire industry.

Man of the Year

(Continued from Page 4)

McMahon's decision to revamp Monday nights paid its top dividends in the fall. *Raw* delivered the strongest cable ratings for any mat show ever opposite ABC's *Monday Night Football*, averaging a 2.9 and equalling or topping a 3 six times during the fourth quarter.

However, his summer buildup of Lex Luger as "an original American hero" was met with mixed results. Luger drew crowds during the summer of '93 on a bus tour to big-city shopping malls and tourist spots after bodyslamming Yokozuna July 4 on the deck of an aircraft carrier. Yet, the momentum lapsed after Luger's bout with Yokozuna at *Summer Slam*. *Slam* also underdelivered pay expectations.

Money continued to be a key factor. At least two trade magazines estimated the upfront market for WWF television advertising to be off \$4 million from the previous year, despite the Titan shows ending the 1992-93 season ranked fifth among all weekend shows in children and teen audiences. Slowly, a number of markets began sliding WWF syndicated shows to less desirable time periods.

McMahon, in one of many cost-cutting measures, demanded commentators—with the exception of Jerry Lawler—to move to Connecticut. Randy Savage went along with the move. But the veteran Gene Okerlund—also unhappy with his salary offer—was not renewed and departed for World Championship Wrestling. By year's end, venerable WWF comic Bobby Heenan would join him in Atlanta.

Lawler would become a focal point for high and low points of McMahon's life in the fall. Lawler was delivering perhaps the finest performances in the last decade of his career on the national WWF shows and his feud with Bret Hart was showing signs of attracting revived interest. But two weeks before the *Survivor Series*, which was largely centered around Lawler and Hart, Lawler was indicted on illegal sex charges in Kentucky. McMahon wasted no time removing Lawler from all arena and television shows, sacrificing *Survivor Series* in the process.

The following week, four federal indictments would be handed down against McMahon and Titan Sports. The long-anticipated charges potentially threatened the survival of the company with one count centering on the Justice Department's intent to separate McMahon from ownership of his long-successful empire. In a not-unexpected irony, McMahon refused to remove himself from national television appearances, unlike his treatment of Lawler the week before.

After a decade of near-unchallenged dominance, Vince McMahon faced more of a rollercoaster financially, professionally and legally in 1993 than in any year of his national prominence. While publicly professing innocence and confidence, clearly McMahon has adapted his operation in a fashion he would never have anticipated when he turned the mat world upside down in late 1983. He has celebrated the victory of a revamped broadcast which has become the unquestioned flagship series of pro wrestling. He has stolen the popular choice as wrestling's top announcer of the last six years. He enjoyed new energy in his own performance level as *Raw* host and in the surprisingly powerful Memphis interviews. Yet, he has lost the linchpin talent of his national explosion. His pay-per-view shows now perform at average or below-average levels compared to past glory years. The national media has now joined what once was the sole domain of insider newsletters in chipping away at what many analysts have termed a facade in the World Wrestling Federation. And McMahon now faces the likely fight of his professional and personal life—a trial which could lead to jail and loss of his beloved Titan Sports, if the government wins.

As the century winds to a close, Vince McMahon may well look back on 1993 as his most pivotal era. For that reason, he is the choice as the *Matwatch '94* Man of the Year.

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